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**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management • Arizona**

**Congressional Staff Briefing
Thursday, February 22, 2007 • 9 a.m.**

Agenda

Welcome and Comments

Elaine Zielinski
BLM Arizona State Director

Land Use Planning

Scott Florence
Acting Associate State
Director

Land Tenure

Mike Taylor,
Deputy State Director,
Resources

Andrada and Empire Mountains Quarries

Patrick Madigan,
Field Manager, Tucson

U.S.-Mexico Border Issues

Bud Shaver,
Special Agent-In-Charge;
Shela McFarlin,
Special Assistant

Information Sharing

Congressional Staff

Bureau of Land Management • Arizona

Congressional Staff Briefing
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SIGN-IN SHEET

Name (please print)	Affiliation
Elaine Zielinski	BLM - AZ SO
Joanie Losacco	BLM - ASD
Patrick Madigan	BLM - Tucson FO
Bonnie Logan	AZ 950
BUD SHAVER	BLM - AZ S.O.
Mike Taylor	BLM - AZ. STATE OFFICE
Shela McFarlin	BLM

Bureau of Land Management • Arizona

Congressional Staff Briefing
Thursday, February 22, 2006 • 9 a.m.

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Name (please print)	Affiliation
TAMARACK LITTLE	Rep. Griffiths
Chad Heywood	Rep. Flake
Brian Clifford	Rep. Flake
Mary Baumbach	Rep. Jeff Flake
CARLOS SIERRA	SEN. McCain
Elizabeth Higgins	Rep. Mitchell
Bruce Raden	Rep. Shadegg
Scott Florence	BLM

Congressional Staff Briefing
Thursday, February 22, 2007
9:00 a.m.
Arizona State Office
Phoenix A&B Conference Room

Table of Contents

Agenda Handouts

1. -BLM Arizona Land Use Planning Update
 -Arizona Strip Proposed Plan/Final EIS
 -Ironwood Forest National Monument Draft Resource Management Plan
 -BLM Land Use Planning Background
2. -Land Tenure
 -Petrified Forest National Park Expansion
3. -Andrada Quarry Mining Plan of Operation
 -Empire Mountains Quarry/Davidson Canyon
4. -Southwest Borderlands Strategic Budget Plan
 -100-Mile Borderlands Map

Other Handouts

5. -Fire Season Update
 -Preliminary National Wildland Fire Outlook
 -2007 Preliminary Fire Season Outlook
6. NLCS Caucus Letter to BLM Director
7. San Pedro Water Issues and Partnerships
8. Law Enforcement Year-End Review



Arizona Land Use Planning Update

February 2007

Agua Fria National Monument and Bradshaw - Harquahala Land Use Plans

- **The Proposed RMP/Final EIS is in the State Office for review and is scheduled to be ready for publication by July 2007.**

Sonoran Desert National Monument and Lower Sonoran Land Use Plans

- **The RMP/EIS planning effort is making progress with completion of the preferred alternative development and work continuing on the impact analysis.**

Lake Havasu Field Office Land Use Plan

- The Proposed RMP/Final EIS was published September 22, 2006.
- One protest was received. Protest resolution has begun. The Record of Decision is scheduled to be published in May 2007.

Grand Canyon Parashant National Monument/Vermilion Cliffs National Monument/Arizona Strip Field Office Land Use Plans

- The Draft RMP/Draft EIS was released for a 90-day public comment period from November 25, 2005 closing March 17, 2006. Eight public meetings were held in January 2006.
- The volume of public comments received was quite significant (over 11,000 comments). Review and response to the comments has occurred throughout the summer.
- **The Proposed RMP/Final EIS is scheduled to be published in March 2007.**

Ironwood Forest National Monument Land Use Plan

- **The Draft RMP/Draft EIS is scheduled to be released on March 2, 2007.**

Yuma Land Use Plan

- State Office review of preliminary alternatives began in May 2005. Five (5) public meetings were held in 2005, on the preliminary alternatives. These meetings were held in Yuma, Quartzsite, Tucson, and Wellton, AZ, and Blythe, CA. Development of the preferred alternatives began during the week of August 22-26, 2005.
- **The Draft RMP/Draft EIS is now on the street for public comment. The Federal Register NOA for the Draft RMP/Draft EIS was published in December 2006. The public comment period closes March 16, 2007. The Final RMP is scheduled for release by the end of 2007.**

San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area and Tucson Field Office Land Use Plans

- The San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (San Pedro RNCA) is located within the Tucson Field Office. Public lands in the San Pedro RNCA are managed under the Safford RMP (1992, 1994) and San Pedro RNCA Management Plan (1989).
- Fiscal year 2005 was the initial year of funding for this planning effort. The San Pedro RNCA RMP will be combined with the Tucson Field Office RMP (Tucson RMP) under one planning effort. The Tucson RMP will address all remaining BLM administered lands not covered by the Las Cienegas NCA, Ironwood Forest National Monument, and San Pedro RNCA RMPs.
- The Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare both land use plans was published in the Federal Register on September 2, 2005. The scoping report was approved in September 2006.

BLM anticipates starting the Gila District-wide planning effort in 2008.

Arizona Strip Proposed Plan/Final EIS

February 22, 2007

The Arizona Strip Proposed Plan/Final EIS, a joint BLM/NPS plan, will be released to the public on Friday, March 2, 2007. The Arizona Strip Proposed Plan/Final EIS includes management plans for three areas:

- Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument (BLM and NPS)
- Vermilion Cliffs National Monument (BLM)
- Arizona Strip Field Office (BLM)

Timeline for planning steps:

- Presidential proclamation establishing two National Monuments on the Arizona Strip – January and November of 2000
- Notice of Intent to begin EIS – April 24, 2002
- Public Scoping Meetings – May/June 2002
- Preliminary Alternative Meetings – June 2003
- Draft Plan/EIS released to the public - November 2005
- Proposed Plan/Final EIS released to the public – March 2, 2007
- BLM Protest Period (30 days) – March 2 to April 2, 2007
- NPS No Action Period (30 days) – March 2 to April 2, 2007
- Governor's Consistency Review – January 29 to April 2, 2007
- Approved Plan/Records of Decision (4 total: 3 BLM and 1 NPS) – Fall 2007

Planning Issues:

- Access (Travel Management) – route designations in Monuments; will follow same process for Arizona Strip Field Office in the next 3-5 years
- Protection of resources, particularly those in the Monuments
 - Protection of Monument Objects
 - 13 Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC); 4 new ACECs to protect cultural resources, threatened and endangered resources, riparian and scenic values (outside Monuments)
 - Wilderness characteristics (areas managed to maintain naturalness, solitude and opportunities for primitive recreation)
 - Visual Resource Management (VRM) designations
- Livestock grazing - 3 forage reserve areas proposed (continuation of one existing since 1992)
- Recreation –identification of Special Recreation Management Areas
- Restoration: ponderosa pine (Mt. Trumbull Project) and pinyon-juniper/sagebrush

Ten Cooperating Agencies assisted BLM and NPS in developing the management plans:

- Coconino and Mohave counties, Arizona
- Washington and Kane counties, Utah
- Towns of Fredonia and Colorado City, Arizona
- Kaibab Paiute Tribe
- U.S. Federal Highway Department
- Arizona Department of Transportation
- Arizona Game and Fish Department

Other agencies and tribes assisting:

- Arizona State Land Department
- Hopi Tribe
- Grand Canyon National Park
- Glen Canyon National Recreation Area
- Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument
- Las Vegas, St. George, Kanab BLM Field Offices
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Kaibab National Forest, North Ranger District
- U.S. Air Force Regional Environmental Office, Dept. of Defense

For information:

Scott Florence, Arizona Strip District Manager
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Scott Sticha, Public Affairs
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Proposed Date of Release: **March 2, 2007**

**BLM RELEASES DRAFT PLAN FOR
IRONWOOD FOREST NATIONAL MONUMENT --
PUBLIC MEETINGS SCHEDULED**

The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Tucson Field Office has released for public review a Draft Resource Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Ironwood Forest National Monument. A 90-day comment period will last from March 2, 2007, to May 30, 2007. The document is available on-line at www.blm.gov/az. Please contact the BLM's Tucson Office at 520.258.7200, if you require an alternate format for the document. Comments on the plan can be submitted by mail to Mark Lambert, BLM Planner, at 12661 E. Broadway, Tucson, AZ 85748, or sent via email to AZ_IFNM_RMP@blm.gov.

Five public open house meetings have been scheduled to present the plan to the public and allow for discussions and questions with BLM staff. The meetings are as follows:

March 29, 2007: Tucson, Arizona

Pima County Parks & Recreation Office, 3500 West River Road from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

April 3, 2007: Sahuarita, Arizona

Sahuarita High School, 350 West Sahuarita Road from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

April 5, 2007: Chandler, Arizona

Chandler Public Library, City Council Chambers, 22 South Delaware Street from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

April 10, 2007: Sells, AZ

Legislative Council Chambers, Main Street, Sells from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

April 12, 2007: Tucson, Arizona

Pima County Parks & Recreation Office, 3500 West River Road from 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

The Ironwood Forest National Monument was established by Presidential Proclamation in June 2000. The 129,000-acre monument, located about 25 miles northwest of Tucson, encompasses several desert mountain ranges including the Silver Bell, Waterman, and Sawtooth ranges, and possesses one of the richest stands of ironwood trees in the Sonoran Desert. The monument contains several archaeological districts and a significant system of cultural and historical sites covering a 5,000-year period. The monument also features a wide diversity of vegetation and wildlife.

The management plan will guide the BLM in its management decisions for the monument, and reflects the many changes that have occurred in the area including intensive development in the Marana area, and increasing demand on public lands for recreation opportunities.

The plan has been developed through extensive public collaboration, and the alternatives presented strike a good balance among all the competing uses and needs for resources within the monument.

[BLM > Land Use Planning](#)

Land Use Planning

Programs

[Energy](#)[Fire](#)[Grazing](#)[Planning](#)[Recreation](#)[BLM Special Areas](#)[Wild Horses & Burros](#)[More . . .](#)

Information

Resources

To ensure the best balance of uses and resource protections for America's public lands, the BLM undertakes extensive land use planning through a collaborative approach with local, State and Tribal governments, the public, and interest groups. The result is a set of land use plans – called Resource Management Plans – that provide the framework to guide decisions for every action and approved use on the Nation's 258 million acres of surface lands and 700 million acres of mineral estate. Ensuring these plans are up-to-date is critical because so many Americans look to the public lands for a wide variety of resources, including energy, right-of-way that support communications and energy delivery, a variety of recreational uses, and crucial habitat for species associated with the Western landscape, such as the sage grouse.

In 2001, the BLM initiated an effort to evaluate and amend or revise its existing land use plans (many of which were more than 20 years old) in response to changing conditions and demands on the public lands. This included the preparation of new plans for designated units of the National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS). To-date, the BLM has completed 41 Resource Management Plans or plan amendments, including 16 of 21 plans deemed time-sensitive plans. Currently, there are more than 50 ongoing planning efforts in various stages of completion. The BLM expects to complete more than 40 additional amendments, revisions, and new plans in the next 2 years.

The BLM became the first Federal agency to establish a consistent, permanent process for cooperating agencies by issuing a final Cooperating Agency Rule in April 2005. These planning regulations ensure the agency fully engages at all levels including State, Tribal, and local governments, as well as other Federal agencies. The Cooperating Agency Rule supports the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), which called on Federal, State and local governments to cooperate with the goal of achieving "productive harmony" between humans and their environment.

For more information about planning, please [click here](#).

Land Use Planning

- [Programs](#)
- [Information](#)
- [Resources](#)

BLM > Land Use Planning > Background

Background

BLM's Resource Management Plans (RMPs) form the basis for every action and approved use on the public lands, including 258 million acres of surface lands and 700 million acres of mineral estate. RMPs are prepared for areas of public land called planning areas, which tend to have similar resource characteristics. Planning emphasizes a collaborative environment in which local, State, and Tribal governments, the public, user groups, and industry work with the BLM to identify appropriate multiple uses of the public lands. RMPs are periodically evaluated to determine if management decisions contained within them are still current and adequate. Where changing conditions (such as the Federal listing of a wildlife or plant species) and/or demands on the public lands have resulted in inadequate management decisions, RMPs are either revised or amended.

Purpose

The primary method BLM uses to establish the balance between land use and resource protection is land use planning. Established by the Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976, planning is designed to project present and future land uses and identify management practices needed to achieve desired conditions. Planning provides BLM with the opportunity to collaborate with other agencies, Tribes, and State and local governments, and many customers and stakeholders develop a common vision for how the public lands should be used and protected and how various land use allocation issues should be resolved.

RMPs are used by managers and the public to accomplish the following:

- Allocate resources and determine appropriate multiple uses for the public lands;
- Develop a strategy to manage and protect resources; and
- Establish systems to monitor and evaluate status of resources and effectiveness of management practices over time.

BLM's RMPs are developed using an interdisciplinary approach that considers competing values and uses and weighs long-term benefits to the public against short-term benefits. Developed with extensive public involvement, RMPs are prepared in conjunction with an analysis of environmental impacts to increase understanding of the decision-making process and disclose the anticipated consequences of plan decisions.

Resource management issues are more complex, more sensitive, and in many more important than ever, yet BLM's mission essentially remains the same: to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.



Land Tenure

February 2007

ISSUES:

The Arizona BLM is challenged to enhance multiple use management through the acquisition of lands that complement existing values, and to dispose of lands that are no longer needed for federal purposes. Land tenure goals must be accomplished using a balanced and creative array of disposal and acquisition management tools. Several options exist for BLM to achieve these goals, including exchanges under Section 206 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and sales/acquisition under the Federal Land Transaction and Facilitation Act (FLTFA).

SUMMARY: The FLTFA was passed by Congress on July 25, 2000, as Title II of Public Law 106-248. The Act expires in 2010. FLTFA allows the BLM to sell public lands identified for disposal through the land use planning process, and to retain the proceeds from these sales for priority land acquisitions. FLTFA is implemented through a National MOU (May, 2003), signed by four federal agencies. It provides for the distribution of funds to be used for land acquisitions in proportionate amounts – BLM (60%), FS (20%), NPS (10%), and FWS (10%). Following are some key points that outline the FLTFA process.

- An Interagency Implementation Agreement was signed by the four agencies in May 2006 to authorize the implementation of FLTFA land sale/ acquisition activities in Arizona.
- FLTFA allows revenue to be raised and retained from the sale of public land managed by BLM, and from exchange equalization payments received from exchange proponents.
 - Parcels identified for sale must have been identified for disposal by a Land Use Plan prior to July 25, 2000.
 - Sale parcels must be environmentally cleared, surveyed and appraised.
 - The public must be properly notified.
 - The land sale will likely consist of a sealed bid/oral auction
- The law also provides for the use of receipts from sales and exchanges to be used to fund administrative expenses for future land disposal actions.
- The majority of the land sale receipts are deposited into the Federal Land Disposal Account to be used for land purchases and for the administration of the program. Funds generated from land sales must be expended within the same State.
 - BLM is currently exploring land sale opportunities for the purpose of funding land acquisition accounts in Arizona.
 - A call to interested public and private parties for the nomination of qualified acquisition properties in Arizona was published in the *Federal Register* in July 2006.
 - An Arizona interagency team with representatives from each of the agencies has been established to review acquisition nominations, and then to forward recommendations on to

an Executive Committee that is made up of Arizona federal agency directors and supervisors.

- Lands identified for acquisition must have been identified by a Land Use Plan prior to July 25, 2000.

BLM PERSPECTIVE:

Land exchanges under Section 206 of FLPMA have become increasingly difficult and complex. There is increased public scrutiny, due to a public perception that exchange proponents benefit at the expense of the government and public. The rapid growth in Arizona has escalated the volatility associated with the markets influenced by the Tucson, Phoenix, and Las Vegas metro areas. Additionally, it is difficult to ascertain appraised values in these markets. Ballot initiatives put to the Arizona voters have failed to give constitutional authority to exchange state trust lands, making it impossible to do exchanges with the State.

CONTACT:

Elaine Zielinski, BLM State Director, (602) 417-9500



Petrified Forest National Park Expansion

February 2007

ISSUES:

The Petrified Forest National Park developed a General Management Plan (GMP) in the 1990s, calling for a proposed boundary expansion of approximately 98,000 acres. Legislative efforts were initiated in 2001 to expand the Park, generally based on the GMP. The Petrified Forest National Park Expansion Act of 2004, Public Law 108-430, was approved on December 4, 2004. This law increased the size of the Park from 93,533 acres to approximately 218,533 acres. The 125,000 acres of additional lands are larger than the area originally identified in the GMP, and is based on input from the private landowners and the Arizona State Land Department. The ownership of the lands in the expansion area is a mixture of private, state, and BLM lands.

SUMMARY:

Since 2001, BLM has been working with the Park to find solutions to the land ownership issues.

Before expansion of the Park boundary, BLM worked with several of the land owners on potential land exchanges. These efforts were unsuccessful, due to valuation issues over the petrified wood and cultural resources found on the property.

Since passage of the expansion legislation, BLM has continued to work cooperatively with the Park on expansion issues. Quarterly coordination meetings are held to review progress on expansion tasks, such as grazing and law enforcement, and land tenure adjustment efforts.

BLM PERSPECTIVE:

BLM is currently working with the owner of the NZ Ranch on a potential exchange for their private property and most of the subsurface mineral estate within the Park expansion boundary.

A tour of the selected and offered lands will be held in early March.

CONTACT:

Elaine Zielinski, BLM State Director, (602) 417-9500



Andrada Quarry Mining Plan of Operation

February 2007

ISSUES:

The BLM is considering a mining plan of operations for reopening of a marble quarry southeast of Tucson. The proposed quarry has been controversial in the local area. The quarry is located in a rural area with an increasing number of residences. The nearest house is 1,450 feet away from the proposed quarry. The local residents are opposed to the re-opening of the quarry. They fear that blasting will damage wells and structures. They are concerned that renewed mining will lower the water table, create dust and noise, and lower property values. They are also concerned with truck traffic on the local roads. Pima County is against the quarry because it is within the Biological Core of the Pima County Conservation Land System.

SUMMARY:

W.R. Henderson Arizona Properties, LLC submitted a Plan of Operations to mine locatable high-purity limestone (marble) on land that is State Trust surface and federal mineral estate. W.R. Henderson owns the mining claims on the split-estate tract. The plan calls for the expansion of an existing quarry on private land on to the State land that has been mined off and on for 40 years. W.R. Henderson submitted a plan to BLM for approval as required under 43 CFR 3809. The total disturbance outlined in the plan is 14 acres, 7 of which are already disturbed from past mining. The operator plans to open pit mine into a hill and haul the material offsite for processing. The resulting quarry will be about 100-feet-deep but will be above the water table. Visual impacts are an issue but greatly mitigated because of the topography. The plan includes a detailed study of blasting and describes how the operator will control the blasting so that no structural damage will occur. After completion of mining, W.R. Henderson intends to reclaim and build homes on the private land.

BLM participated in two scoping meetings with people from the local area to hear issues and concerns as part of the National Environmental Policy Act process. BLM mailed post cards to the entire zip code where the mine is located to announce the availability of the Environmental Assessment for a 30-day public review and comment. The Tucson Field Office received 25 letters and emails, including one from the Pima County Administrator, all opposed to the mine.

BLM signed the decision record approving the mining plan on July 6, 2005. Petitions for a State Director Review were filed by three parties in August 2005. A stay was issued by the State Director on the decision to approve the plan. BLM has revised the Environmental Assessment (EA) to better address the issues brought forth by the petitioners.

A local group, the Empire-Fagan Coalition, sponsored a public meeting in August 2006 to ask the public to sign a petition opposing three proposed limestone mining operations southeast of Tucson, one of which is the proposed Andrada Quarry.

BLM PERSPECTIVE:

W.R. Henderson is exercising his right under the General Mining Law to mine his valid claims. This is not a discretionary action.

CONTACT:

Elaine Zielinski, BLM State Director, (602) 417-9500



Empire Mountains Quarry/Davidson Canyon

February 2007

ISSUES:

Arizona Portland Cement has filed a plan of operations to quarry limestone from claims located southeast of Tucson. The claims are located in an area identified as environmentally sensitive and part of Pima County's Davidson Canyon Natural Preserve. The claims are adjacent to State Trust Land leases that the company also owns, and are also permitted with the State Land Department to mine as well. The Empire Mountain quarry is about five miles east of the Andrada Quarry. Empire-Fagan Coalition, a local environmental group, Pima County and nearby residents oppose the Empire Mountains and Andrada quarries.

SUMMARY:

Arizona Portland Cement (APC) submitted a Plan of Operations to mine high-purity limestone (marble) on land that is State Trust surface and federal mineral estate. APC owns the mining claims on the split-estate. The limestone will be mined as a source of calcium carbonate to manufacture portland cement at its facility in Rillito near Marana, Arizona. Given the perceived controversial nature of the action, BLM requested the applicant to hold a public scoping meeting as the first step of the NEPA process. This meeting was held December 8, 2006, at a local high school. About 55 people attended the meeting and most expressed opposition to the proposal. Letters of opposition were also received from Pima County. Concerns expressed include impacts to the Davidson Canyon wildlife corridor, noise, blasting effects on nearby wells, and visual impacts. These concerns and other issues will be addressed in the Environmental Assessment. A scoping meeting for the preparation of the NEPA documents has been scheduled for March 28, 2007.

BLM PERSPECTIVE:

Arizona Portland Cement is exercising its right under the General Mining Law to mine on its mining claims. This is not a discretionary action.

CONTACT:

Elaine Zielinski, BLM State Director, (602) 417-9500



Southwest Borderlands Strategic Budget Plan

February 2007

In Arizona, BLM manages 44 miles adjacent to the U.S. border with Mexico and 3.7 million acres within the borderlands, a zone stretching about 100 miles north of the border (but moving further northward). Within this zone, BLM manages the Ironwood Forest and Sonoran Desert National Monuments, the San Pedro Riparian and Las Cienegas National Conservation Areas (NCA), the Colorado River riparian zone, and other wilderness and special management areas.

Public lands are severely impacted by international human smuggling and drug trafficking. Field office workloads are stretched to manage border issues. Impacts take many forms: millions of pounds of litter; hundreds of illegal trails and roadways; hundreds of abandoned vehicles and thousands of abandoned bicycles; damaged resources, archaeological sites and riparian areas; damaged water storage facilities, fences, gates, and other infrastructure; and immigrant-started fires. Two other impacts that cannot be overlooked: 1) increasing concerns for employee and visitor safety and associated communication and protection needs; and 2) increasing, unfunded work to support the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) operations, infrastructure and technology.

In 2007, BLM offices in Arizona, New Mexico and California identified the major border workloads which are current or expected over the next five years. The results are captured in the Southwest Borderlands Strategic Budget Plan (the SW Plan), which is an internal funding strategy to guide agency and departmental fiscal planning. The review of needs clearly indicates a major funding need for assessment, mitigation and restoration, but also that significant resources are being utilized to support the DHS border security mission without DHS financial support to DOI BLM.

The Southwest Borderlands Strategic Budget Plan:

Since 2002, BLM staffs have supported DHS Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Office of Border Patrol (BP) efforts through realty authorizations, project coordination, and shared operations and intelligence. In March 2006, a National Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between DHS, the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the Department of Agriculture identified processes for resolving issues related to access to public lands, security, training, infrastructure, intelligence sharing and minimizing DHS impacts.

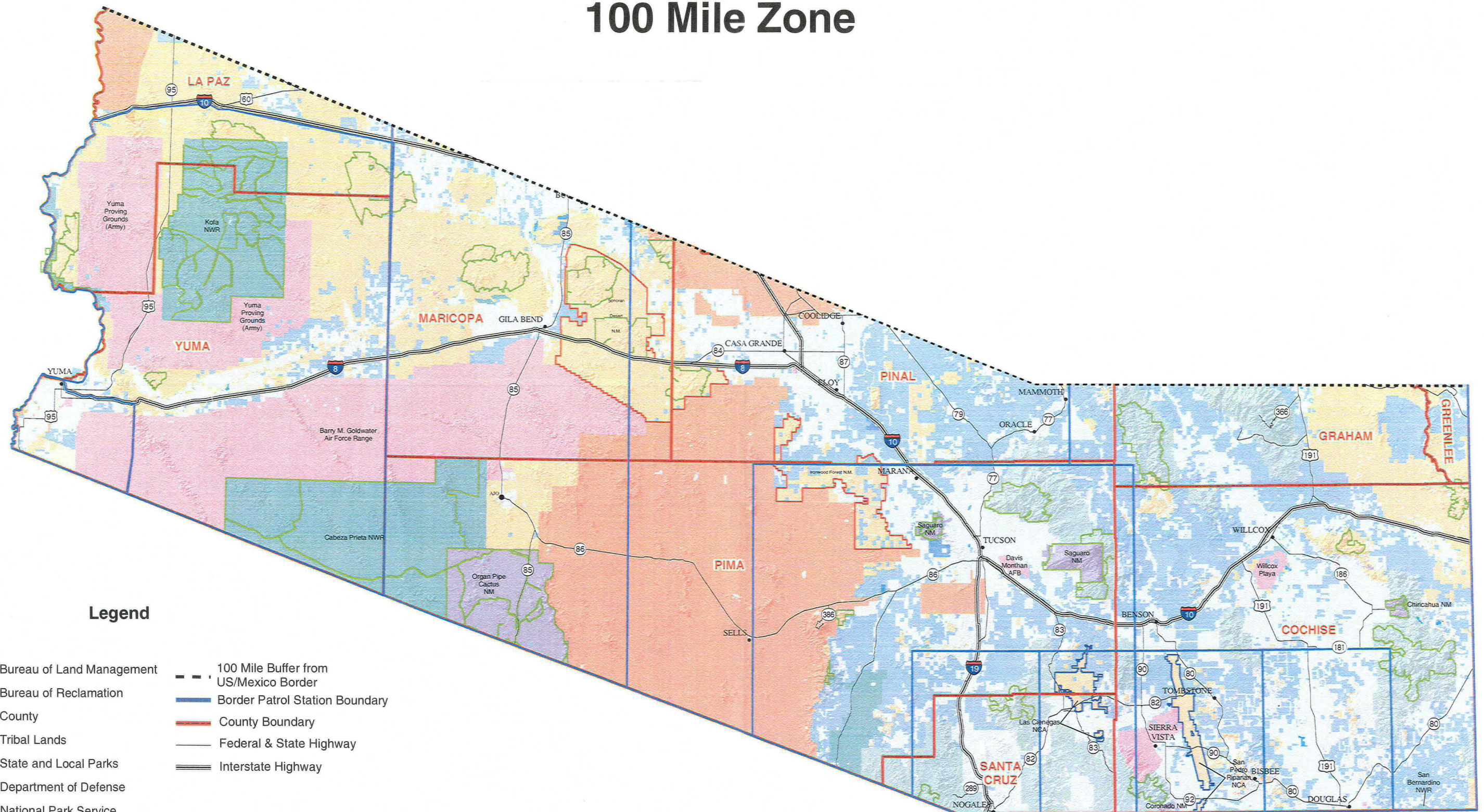
Under the MOU, BLM responsibilities to support DHS fall into three areas: 1) assure access to public lands for DHS operations and infrastructure; 2) facilitate DHS compliance with the MOU, authorizations, and federal laws and regulations; and 3) minimize impacts to public lands through coordination and environmental education. Phase 1 of the SW Plan identifies all activities and funding required for BLM offices to support DHS actions under those three areas and provides recommendations for specific needs which DHS could provide funding.

As the DHS begins to gain operational control of the border, BLM will increase its efforts in restoring public lands. The long-term effort will require multi-year planning and funding to achieve restoration of lands with significant, nationally recognized values. The SW Plan is a three-state plan to restore healthy landscapes to the southwest borderlands.

CONTACT:

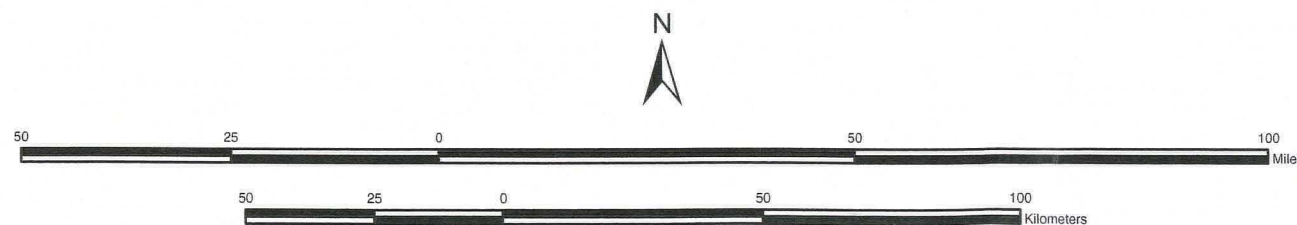
Elaine Zielinski, BLM State Director, (602) 417-9500

Southern Arizona 100 Mile Zone



Legend

- Bureau of Land Management
- Bureau of Reclamation
- County
- Tribal Lands
- State and Local Parks
- Department of Defense
- National Park Service
- Private
- State
- State Game & Fish
- Forest Service
- Fish & Wildlife Service
- 100 Mile Buffer from US/Mexico Border
- Border Patrol Station Boundary
- County Boundary
- Federal & State Highway
- Interstate Highway



Produced by the BLM Arizona State Office Geographic Sciences Team on July 25, 2006

No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data, or for purposes not intended by the BLM. Spatial information may not meet National Map Accuracy Standards. This information may be updated without notification.



Fire Season Update

February 2007

2007 FIRE SEASON AND RESOURCES:

Early indicators show that Arizona can expect higher than normal fuel loading in the Sonoran and upland grassland ecosystems in addition to the intermediate chaparral ecosystem leading to higher than average fire occurrence in 2007, if conditions do not change. The National Office is aware of the fire potential in the southwest and supportive of the efforts BLM Arizona is undertaking, including additional one-time seasonal funds to assist with its hiring efforts.

FUELS REDUCTION PROJECTS:

In FY 07, BLM Arizona plans to implement fuels reduction projects on 9,000 acres in the wildland urban interface, and 21,000 acres outside the wildland urban interface. BLM will use various treatment methods, including mechanical treatments and prescribed fire, if conditions permit. Since 2002, BLM Arizona has treated 66,000 acres in non-wildland urban interface areas and 32,000 acres in wildland urban interface areas.

WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE:

BLM Arizona is proactive in working with local and State partners to develop Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP). The BLM is currently assisting Navajo, Yuma, and Mohave counties to complete county-wide plans. Since the program's inception, numerous CWPPs have been completed statewide including: La Paz, Graham, Greenlee, and Yavapai counties; Greater Flagstaff; Rim Country; Mt. Lemmon; and Cascabel. Since 2002, BLM Arizona has contributed \$2.6 million dollars in fire-related grants to assist communities.

CONTACT:

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Preliminary National Wildland Fire Outlook
National Interagency Fire Center
Predictive Services Group



Issued: February 9, 2007

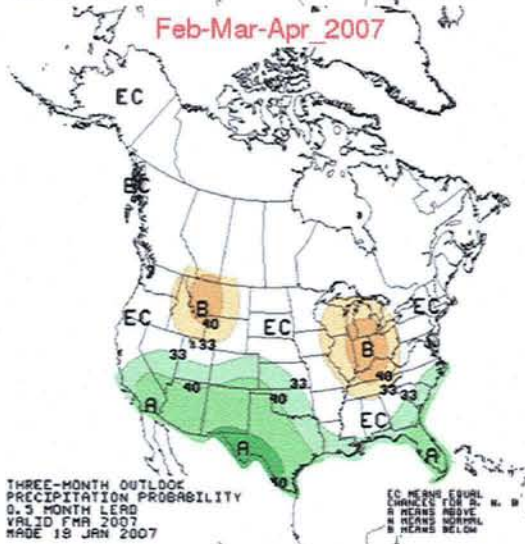
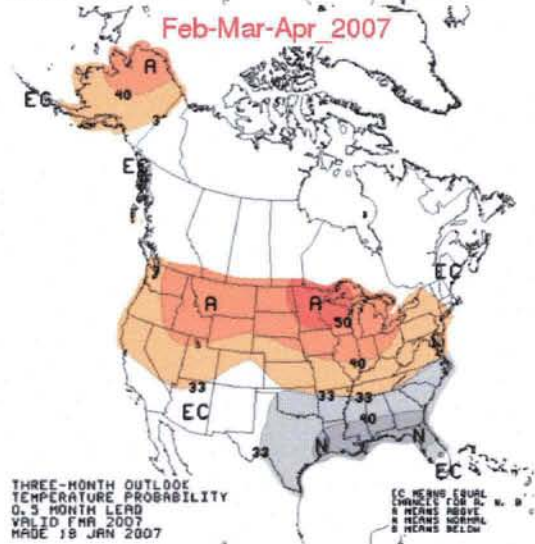
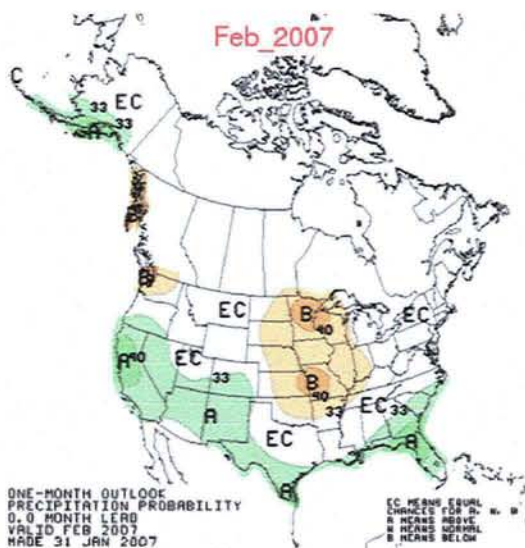
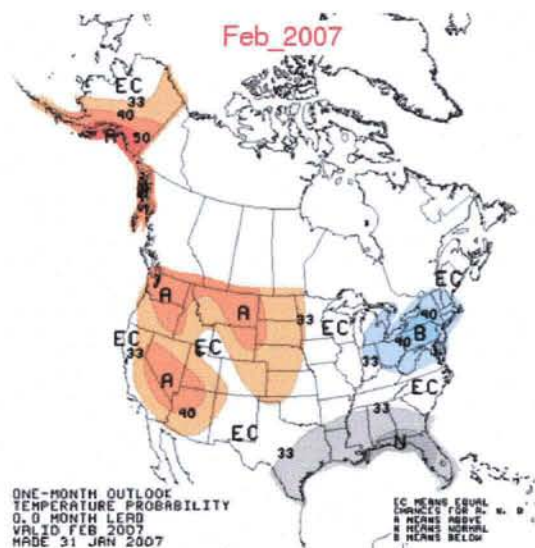
Preliminary Wildland Fire Outlook – February through June, 2007

Significant Fire potential is expected to be higher than normal from the Pacific Northwest to the western Great Lakes, southern California, western Arizona and portions of the Southeast. Fire season potential is shaped by a number of factors, including snowpack, the timing of spring snowmelt, rainfall, temperatures and drought. The most critical factors influencing fire potential this outlook period are:

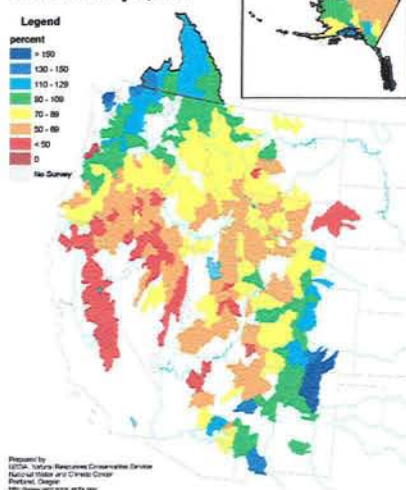
- El Niño is weakening but is still expected to impact late winter and early spring weather. These impacts include wetter than normal weather over the southern tier of states and above normal temperatures across the northern U.S.
- Current drought conditions across portions of Wyoming, and the Northern Rockies eastward to the Great Lakes are forecast to persist and elevate fire potential.
- As of February 1, snowpack is generally below normal across most of the West. While snowpack amounts should improve in California during February, Idaho and Montana will likely see continued below normal snowpack through spring.
- Dry winter conditions in Southern California and western Arizona followed by a wet spring is expected to increase fine fuel loadings and fire potential.
- Current drought and fuel conditions in Oklahoma and Texas are much improved compared to last season; thus, normal to below normal fire potential is predicted for these areas.



Weather

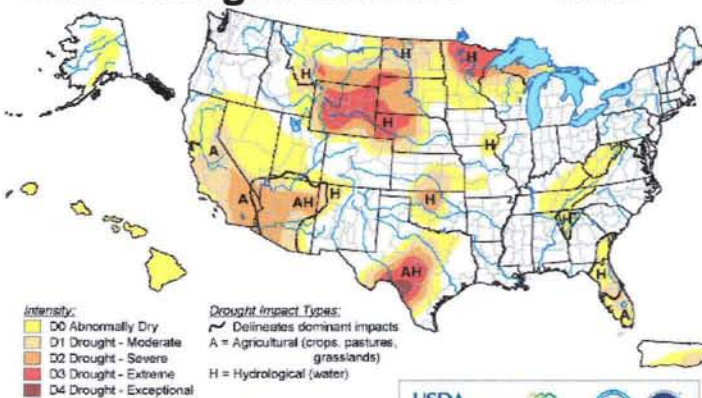


**Mountain Snowpack
as of February 1, 2007**



U.S. Drought Monitor

February 6, 2007
Valid 7 a.m. EST



Released Thursday, February 8, 2007

Author: Mark Svoboda, National Drought Mitigation Center

<http://drought.unl.edu/dm>

Valid: Apr. - Jul. 2007
Issue Date: January 9, 2007
Complete Update: April 27, 2007

2007 PRELIMINARY FIRE SEASON OUTLOOK

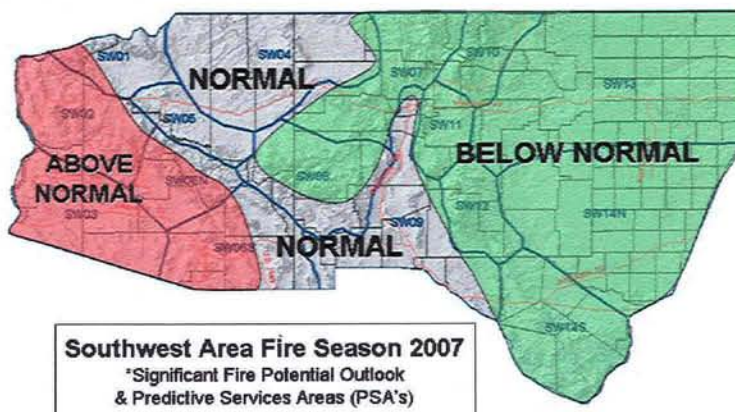
PRODUCT INTENT & DESCRIPTION

The intent of this outlook is to provide a scientifically based early look at factors affecting the potential severity of the primary Southwest Area fire season, normally April through July. Fire season potential is predicted in terms of the likelihood of significant fire events that will require mobilization of additional resources from outside the area in which they originate. Areas highlighted as "Above Normal" are likely to require additional external resource mobilization.

SUMMARY

The overall 2007 Southwest Area fire season will be Above Normal across the lower elevations of Arizona and Below Normal to Normal elsewhere. The season will start late, end slightly later than usual with the monsoon onset and be confined mainly to lower elevation grass and brush regimes in Arizona. Overall, the need for additional firefighting resources from outside the area is expected to be near normal this season.

- Forecast of wet and cooler than normal conditions area-wide through April, with continued mitigation of long term drought.
- Fire potential in higher elevation, heavier fuel regimes to be mitigated by above normal moisture and compaction of fine fuels by snow cover.
- Abundance of carryover fine herbaceous fuels from the strong 2006 monsoon, leading to heavy fuel loadings and increased fire potential in the fine fuel regimes.
- Robust green-up and extended growing period in the herbaceous fuels expected to further increase the fine fuel loading and delay the fire season onset until late May.
- Monsoon to begin on time to one week late (early-mid July), with main moisture surge into Arizona and possible below normal rainfall east of the continental divide.
- Insufficient time between spring and summer moisture to develop a significant fire potential problem across the eastern half of the area.

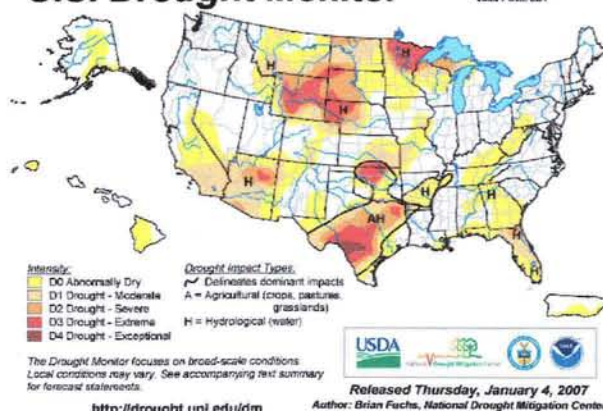


*Significant Fire Potential: The likelihood a fire situation will require mobilization of additional resources from outside the area in which the fire situation originates.

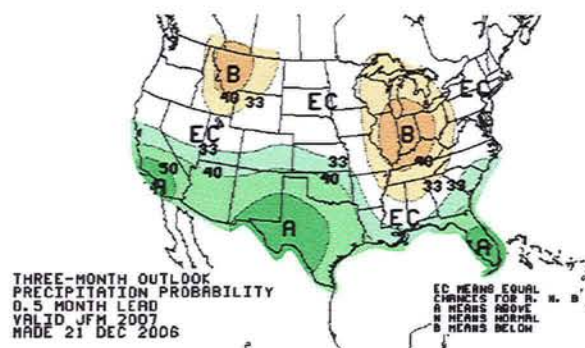
SUPPORTING INPUT DATA

U.S. Drought Monitor

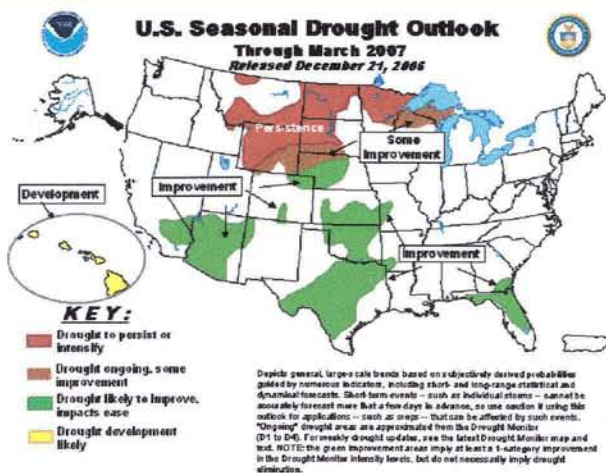
January 2, 2007
Valid 7 a.m. EST



Most recent U.S. Drought Monitor image shows portions of the Southwest Area as Abnormally Dry or in Moderate hydrological (long term) drought. Long term drought acts to increase dead fuel loadings and, depending on more recent conditions, can lead to unusually low fuel moisture values in both live and dead fuels. Although portions of northern and eastern Arizona remain in elevated drought conditions, much of this area is not expected to see above normal fire potential this season.



Outlook for the months of January-February-March from the Climate Prediction Center shows relatively moist conditions forecast for the entire southwestern U.S. Moderate El Nino conditions are beginning to allow storm systems to affect the region with significant precipitation. Though forecasts suggest El Nino will weaken over the next several months, precipitation is expected to be above normal area-wide through the spring.



U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook shows the effects of the forecasted conditions on the current drought situation as shown earlier by the U.S. Drought Monitor. Current drought conditions mainly from the divide westward are expected to improve through March. This falls in line with the winter-spring forecasts, which support the expected normal to below normal 2007 fire season potential for much of the Southwest Area.

Predictive Services Group
Southwest Coordination Center

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 20, 2006

BLM Director Kathleen Clarke
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Clarke,

It has come to our attention that the BLM has proposed significant changes in the management of its National Landscape Conservation System. We are writing to request that your office brief us on these changes before changes are implemented.

As co-chairs of the National Landscape Conservation System Caucus, it is our mission to ensure the agency can and does protect this special 26 million acre network of western lands and waters. These National Monuments, wilderness areas, scenic rivers and trails provide a uniquely American experience, valued by millions of our constituents.

Of particular concern are the implications of the new "Managing for Excellence" initiative on the Conservation System's budget, staffing, and program objectives. We call upon your agency to provide data and commitments regarding:

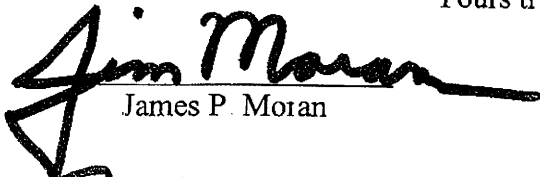
- The impact of the proposed changes on the Conservation System's FY08 budget and staffing. The System already operates with bare-bones funding and numerous unfilled positions, with no capacity to sustain further cuts.
- Historical and projected budgets and staffing levels for programs now expected to be managed under the umbrella of the National Landscape Conservation System office, such as cooperative conservation, partnerships, and volunteerism.
- A new formal budget structure that would provide ongoing transparency regarding the Conservation System's budget.
- Performance goals for the Conservation System program and other new programs to be managed in this Washington Office.

- Details about how the BLM will measure the impacts of the reorganization on the ability of Conservation System staff to achieve their mission of keeping these lands "healthy, wild, and open."

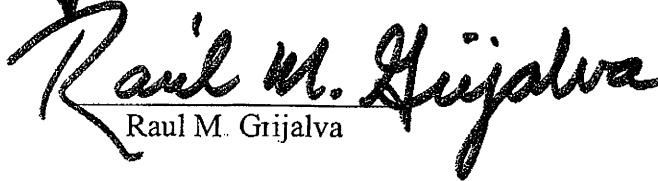
We would like to meet with you and your staff to discuss the above issues, and we urge the BLM to withhold implementing the *Managing for Excellence* initiative as it relates to the Conservation System pending congressional review and public comment.

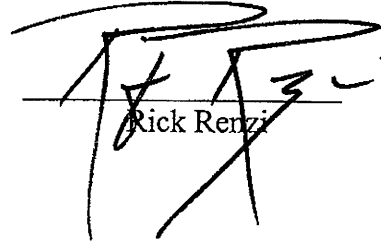
We look forward to working with you regarding these concerns.

Yours truly,


James P. Moran


Mary Bono


Raul M. Grijalva


Rick Renzi

National Landscape Conservation System Co-Chairs:



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Washington, D.C. 20240

<http://www.blm.gov>

FEB 02 2007

Ms. Ann Morgan
The Wilderness Society
1615 M Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Ms. Morgan:

Thank you for your letter of December 8, 2006, cosigned by your colleagues, to Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne regarding the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS). Secretary Kempthorne asked the BLM to respond.

The BLM appreciates your coalition's support for the NLCS. Many of your suggested actions have been implemented throughout the NLCS. For example, the NLCS showcases best practices for the BLM at large, including the development of implementation strategies for recently completed land use plans. Commencing with Arizona's Las Cienegas National Conservation Area, this strategic initiative has been successfully piloted at several NLCS units and is being adopted BLM-wide. There are 13 implementation strategies currently underway in the NLCS alone, with more non-NLCS strategies scheduled to begin this year.

Likewise, the NLCS facilitates unique visitor experiences. These experiences range from the opening of a visitor center at Montana's Pompeys Pillar National Monument to the unveiling of an internet-based permit system for the popular "Wave" formation in Arizona's Paria Wilderness. In these and other cases, the NLCS enables people to explore their public lands while safeguarding the often fragile places that the NLCS was established to protect. The BLM also encourages and empowers many partnerships and friends groups to involve local communities in helping to meet the BLM's management objectives.

Regarding your suggestions and comments on the budget for NLCS for fiscal year 2008, including those concerning the Land and Water Conservation Fund, we will consider your input as we develop our budget recommendations. We are committed to requesting a budget with adequate resources that protects all NLCS units in a manner that is efficient, effective, and flexible. If you would like to learn more about ongoing budget and planning activities in the NLCS, I encourage you to contact Elena Daly, Director of the NLCS, at (202) 208-3516.

Thank you again for your support of the NLCS. Through the work of your coalition, as well as our other citizen partners, cooperative conservation continues to thrive throughout the NLCS and the BLM overall. Identical letters have been sent to your colleagues.

Sincerely,

/s/ Henri R. Bisson

For Kathleen Clarke
Director



San Pedro Water Issues and Partnerships

February 2007

ISSUES:

The San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA) is administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and is affected by increasing water consumption on nearby state and private lands, particularly in and around the city of Sierra Vista, Arizona. Declining surface flow in the river threatens habitat for more than 400 bird species, riparian and aquatic wildlife habitat, and other uses, including scientific and educational study and recreational activities. Congress has recognized the Upper San Pedro Partnership (USPP) and directed federal agencies to take a lead role in assisting basin water users to achieve a water balance for their benefit and to mitigate the risks to the environment.

Communities in the basin are experiencing dramatic growth, and local governments support continued economic growth. Nearby Fort Huachuca depends on the same groundwater supply as Sierra Vista and other communities in the area. This groundwater also contributes to the San Pedro River flow. Thus, partners in the San Pedro watershed are competing for water, which is fueling heated technical and political debate and exposing all users to legal challenge.

A Federal Reserve water right was created as part of the legislation establishing the SPRNCA. The BLM has received a certificated instream flow water right from the State of Arizona and has amended the quantification of its federal reserved right. Negotiations among the parties in the adjudication are ongoing, under the direction of the Special Master in Superior Court, Maricopa County.

BLM has been working closely with the USPP to help resolve the San Pedro issues. However, the added growth and sensitivity to the issues in the watershed and partner competing interests, have limited the effectiveness of the USPP. BLM may need to consider alternative courses of action to fulfill its SPRNCA management obligations, avoid legal challenges, and protect the jurisdictional watershed resources.

SUMMARY:

The state courts have recognized that the Federal Reserve water right confers some protection against damage to the SPRNCA from groundwater pumping. A BLM team has gathered the data, conducted studies and analysis, and has established a minimum quantity of water necessary to fulfill the purposes of the reservation. Quantification of the minimum amount of water for the San Pedro River includes monthly median and flood flows for the main stem of the San Pedro River and the Babocomari River tributary, point sources, and groundwater levels to support the riparian vegetation and habitat. Some groundwater models show that the river's perennial flow could cease in less than 25 years.

On January 31, 2006, the Department of Justice filed an amended claim for surface and ground water with the Arizona Department of Water Resources, reflecting the quantification. The Gila River Adjudication Special Master proposed that all parties informally negotiate the water uses and claims. However, because of the sensitivity of the issues in the basin, negotiations in an informal setting are not likely to result in a timely, meaningful settlement. So, on August 7, 2006, the Department of Justice (DOJ) responded to the Special Master that BLM would not be interested in informal negotiations, but would consider using a formal mediation process to negotiate the SPRNCA claim. After considering DOJ response, the Special

Master ordered that a settlement conference process begin in November 2006, and run through January 2007 to determine if the BLM claims could be settled outside the traditional adjudicative process. In January 2007, and only after two meetings, the Special Master ordered an additional meeting with the parties by March 20, 2007.

Other legal action to protect the river flow is a possibility. However, a preferred alternative is to cooperate with the USPP, which consists of approximately 21 local, state, and federal agencies, conservation organizations, and water providers in the Upper San Pedro Basin. The primary goal of the partnership is to develop and support implementation of an Upper San Pedro Basin water conservation plan. The plan objective is to assure availability of sufficient water for the future needs of the SPRNCA and the people of the Upper Basin.

Congressional appropriations of about \$1 million in each of the past seven years has allowed water and habitat studies, monitoring, and projects on storm water and effluent recharge, water conservation, and groundwater modeling; however, funding for fiscal year 2007 is uncertain because of the Continuing Resolution. Local governments have made attempts to mitigate impacts of groundwater pumping. An agreement between U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Fort Huachuca allows the fort to contribute to basin wide activities to reduce effects of groundwater pumping on endangered species. Recently the city of Sierra Vista approved a two-thousand acre high density housing development in the basin, which could overshadow USPP progress achieving sustainable yield to groundwater by 2011.

In November 2003, Public Law 108-195, Section 321, was established to further protect the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area and Fort Huachuca by reducing the amount of groundwater pumping by 2011 through work by members of the partnership and the communities within the Sierra Vista sub-watershed. The initial 2004 Report to Congress was submitted in 2005, the 2005 annual report was prepared in August 2005 but has not yet been forwarded to Congress, and the 2006 draft report was prepared and forwarded in July 2006 to the Department for review. The 2006 report has documented that the USPP is not making adequate progress in conserving and augmenting consumptive uses to meet the ever increasing demands for groundwater.

The effort to manage hydrologic uses has become more difficult due to the conservation and augmentation actions by local governments. Development and construction in the watershed has generated a major shortfall in meeting the goals of Section 321 of P. L. 108-195 to bring groundwater uses within sustainable yield by 2011. Approval of additional development also jeopardizes BLM's ability to meet the requirements on P.L. 100-696 to maintain a Federal Water Reserve necessary to protect and enhance the SPRNCA resources.

BLM PERSPECTIVE:

The BLM has pursued multiple, parallel tracks to help mitigate the effects of groundwater pumping in the region and to prepare for pursuing the Federal Reserve water claims. These include: 1) participation in the USPP to ensure direct input into future water allocation and natural resource issue resolution; 2) work with the USPP to implement projects to augment and conserve water to sustain the aquifer; 3) quantify and file the Federal Reserve water claim required through Public Law 100-696; 4) participate, monitor, and verify actions required under Public Law 108-195; and 5) acquire land and conservation easements adjacent to the SPRNCA to limit urban development and to retire agricultural irrigation.

On January 31, 2006, the DOJ filed an amended claim for a federally reserved water right for surface and ground water on behalf of the BLM for SPRNCA.

BLM may also need to consider alternative supplements to its work with the USPP, including 1) placing a moratorium on BLM land disposals in the basin, and 2) working with local officials in developing land use plans consistent with the goal of achieving sustainable yield in the basin.

CONTACT:

Elaine Zielinski, BLM State Director, (602) 417-9500